



NORTHWEST STRAITS
marine conservation initiative

August 8, 2003

Dr. Jeffrey P. Koenings, Director
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
600 Capitol Way N.
Olympia, WA 98501-1091

RE: "Tribal Policy Statement: Marine Protected Areas, Marine Reserves, Marine Sanctuaries, and Fishery Conservation Zones" June 26, 2003

Dear Dr. Koenings:

The Northwest Straits Commission was recently copied with Billy Frank Jr.'s July 11 letter and the accompanying Tribal Policy Statement transmitted to the Secretary of Commerce. Your office was similarly copied. As the NWIFC chairman's letter emphasizes, and as we have learned in our own many transactions and interactions, "Tribes and the state of Washington have...developed a cooperative framework which supports decision-making on fisheries management and habitat protection."


Indeed, one of the Northwest Straits Commission's most rewarding meetings was devoted to exactly this framework. On that occasion in 2002, you candidly shared ideas with Billy Frank, and our thirteen NWSC-member-participants. The exchange covered sensitive issues in a non-confrontational spirit of mutual respect. It was a profound highlight and example of what our commissioners hope to accomplish together. Thank you once again.

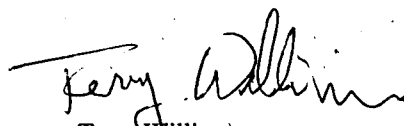
Now the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC) has devoted the time and effort necessary to forge a written, official policy on the complex issues of marine protected areas and similar designations. We salute them in this undertaking. The discussion that followed the policy's reception and review at the Northwest Straits Commission's July 25 meeting was congratulatory. We have all grappled repeatedly with the issues presented and rights affected, and were wholly impressed by the concise, direct manner in which the NWIFC policy clarified and addressed those issues within the borders of three pages.

As you know, the Northwest Straits Commission is a volunteer panel, working towards benchmarks established in our enabling legislation. We are neither regulator, nor sovereign – and in the course of our work we collaborate with the co-managers. We honor and salute the patience, process and cohesion that the Tribes have demonstrated by the adoption of such a policy. By a companion letter I am so advising NWIFC chairman Billy Frank Jr.

If our Commission may again serve as the forum for another such dialogue between yourself and the co-managers, focused on the thoughtful criteria set forth in their new policy, please allow us to make it so. We would be honored.

Sincerely,


Tom Cowan
Director


Terry Williams
Tribal Committee Chair, Tulalip Tribes

County Marine
Resource Committees

Clallam

Island

Jefferson

San Juan

Skagit

Snohomish

Whatcom

In Cooperation with
Participating Tribal
Co-Managers

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OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR